COMIC BOOK PROFILES™

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The magazine about comic book professionals

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BERNIE WRIGHTSON

SUPPORTING INTERVIEWS BY

Drew Hayes
Pamela Hazelton
Tony Isabella
Kelley Jones
Mike Kaluta
Ron Marz
Joy Mosier-Dubinsky
Joe Orlando
Mike Pascale
Roger Price
Steve Tice
Len Wein
Mark Wheatley

FROM THE PUBLISHER

First, I'd like to thank all of you who took the time to send us letters. We appreciate the feedback, and on page 39 is a list of profile requests. We worked diligently to correct the problem with typos, that some of you mentioned. We especially want to know who you'd like to see profiled. Please keep those letters coming!

We have instituted two new columns, *Timeline* which gives a brief overview of the featured professional's career; and *Who Are They?*, an alphabetical listing of all those who gave supporting interviews and their contribution to comics and/or connection to the profiled artist.

This issue we focus on the career of Bernie Wrightson, one of the most talented artists in the business. A special thanks to all those who contributed to this issue: Drew Hayes, Pamela Hazelton, Fred Hembeck, Tony Isabella, Kelley Jones, Mike Kaluta, Ron Marz, Joy Mosier-Dubinsky, Joe Orlando, Mike Pascale, Roger Price, Steve Tice, Len Wein, and Mark Wheatley. And of course, extra special thanks to Bernie for all his assistance.

Next issue we profile Neal Adams. What a guy! What an interview!

Tina

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The cover is of *Frankenstein* by Bernie Wrightson. This drawing was originally published in *A Look Back*, edited by Christopher Zavisa. The artwork on page 15 is also from this book. The art on pages 3,6, and 17 is from Dark Destiny III: Children of Dracula. The Captain Sternn art on pages 13, 14, and 35 is from Captain Sternn: Running Out Of Time and is inked by Shepherd Hendrix. Art on pages 21 and 23 are from Eleven Eleven. Art on page 16 is from Cycle of the Werewolf. All are *©& TM 1998 Bernie Wrightson. All rights reserved.*

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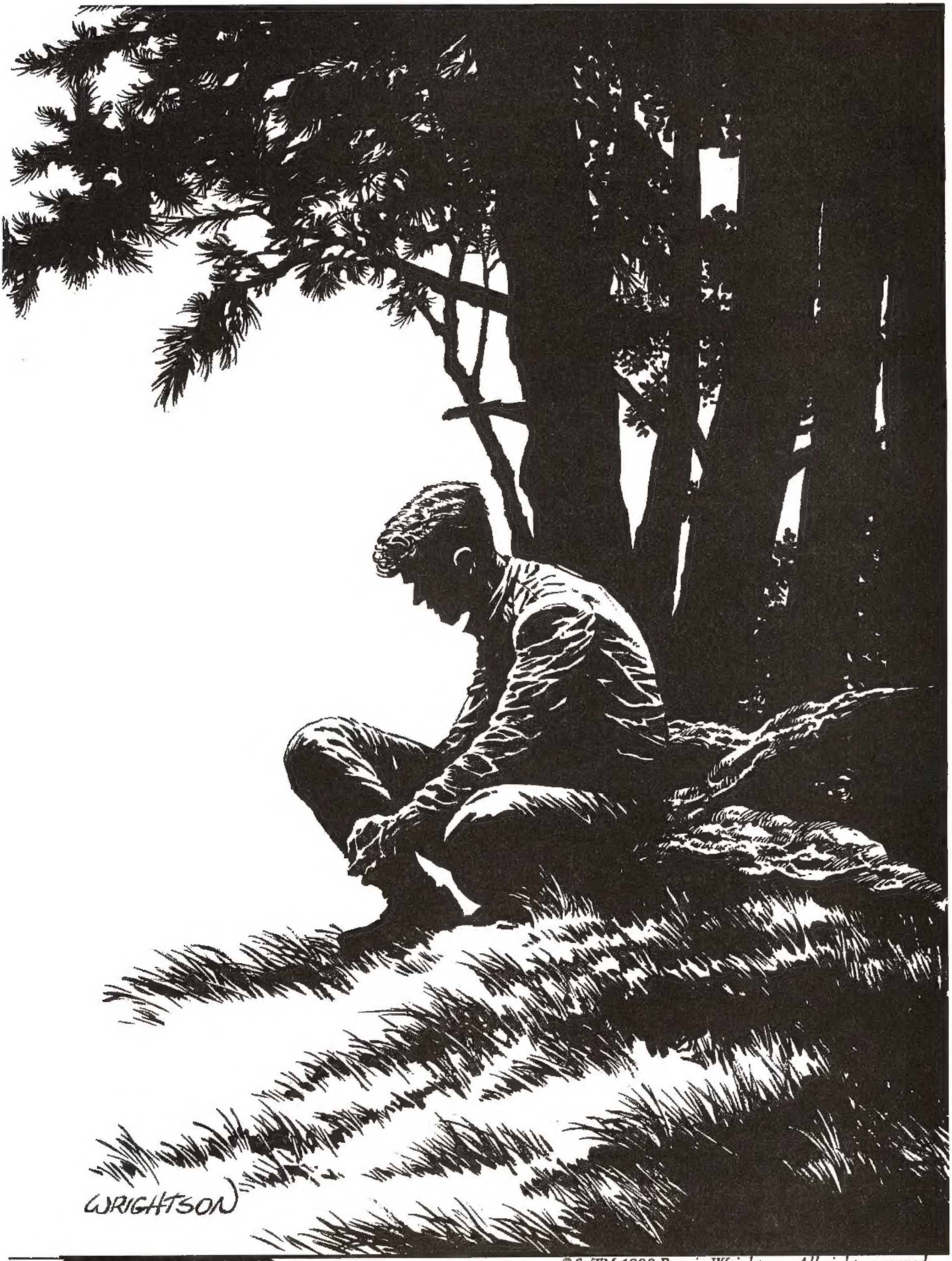

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PROFILE

BERNIE WRIGHTSON

A TRUE MASTER

TiMELiNE

Bernie Wrightson

1947 Bernie Wrightson born on October 27 in Baltimore Maryland.

1967 Bernie attends a science fiction convention where he first meets, among others, Frank Frazetta, Hal Foster, Michael Kaluta, and Jeff Jones. He wins Best New Talent award at the convention.

1968 Bernie starts job at Baltimore Sun as an editorial cartoonist. Later that year he attends comic book convention in New York where he shows some of his artwork around. Soon afterwards he is offered work by DC and he quits his job at the Baltimore Sun and moves to New York.
Also that year the "other" Bernie Wrightson wins the gold metal in springboard diving with 170.15 points.

1969 First professional work is published in *House of Mystery* #179.

1971 First appearance of Swamp Thing in issue #92 of *House of Secrets*.

1972 *Swamp Thing* regular series begins.

1973 *Plop!* #1 featuring The Gourmet written by Steve Skeates is published.

1974 Bernie leaves *Swamp Thing* after issue #10. Bernie works on *Monsters Color-the-Creature Book* for Phil Seuling. He also starts working for Warren at this time.

1976 Bernie along with Barry Windsor-Smith, Jeff Jones, and Michael Kaluta found The Studio.

1978 Bernie leaves The Studio.

1979 *A Look Back* is originally published.

1981 *Heavy Metal* released. Contains Bernie's Captain Sternn. Eugene Levy does the voice of Captain Sternn.

1983 *Bernie Wrightson's Frankenstein* written by Mary Shelley and *Cycle of the Werewolf* by Stephen King are published.

1988 Bernie returns to Batman in *Batman: The Cult.*

1991 *Punisher P.O.V.* is released by Marvel.

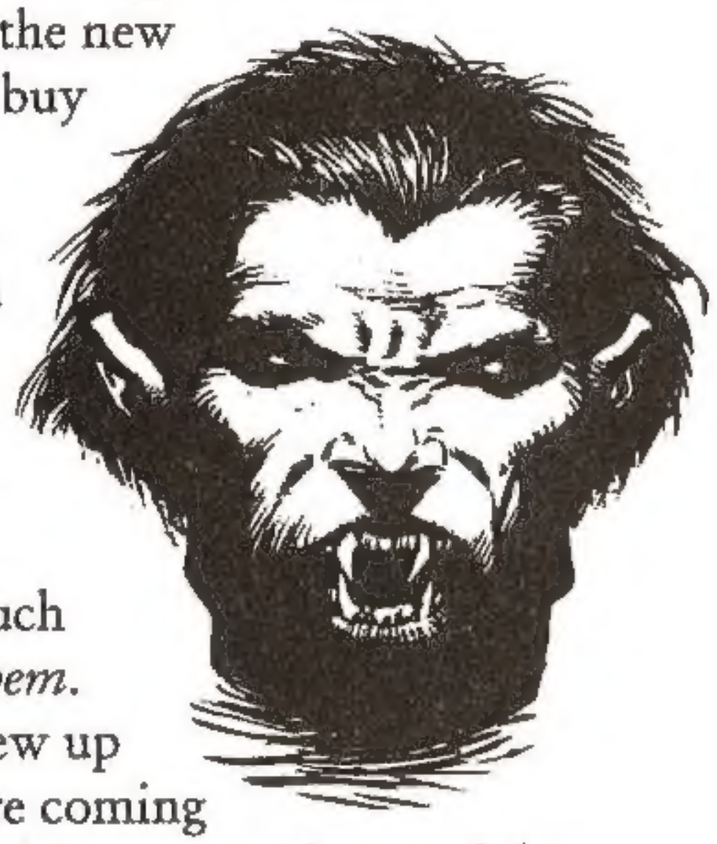
1993 *Captain Sternn: Running Out of Time* published by Kitchen Sink Press.

1997 *Batman/Aliens* published by DC Comics and Dark Horse. The Shining *TV Guide* cover is released.

wrightson

We've read that you grew up next to a cemetery.
I lived next door to Oaklawn Cemetery. I spent most of my time in the woods next to the cemetery. The woods where I hung out was the old part of the cemetery. Over time, the soil washed back, and ivy grew all over everything. You had to watch where you walked, because you could fall into what was once an open grave. I would spend some time looking at the dates on the tombstones.

What comics did you read?
I remember going to the drugstore, up the street from my Grandmother's house. They had an entire wall, floor to ceiling, of comic book racks. I immediately went to the EC comics. The covers were so strong. This was the real thing. I'd go through the EC comics, all the new titles, every month. If you didn't have a dime to buy a comic, you could rent a comic book for two cents. All the neighborhood kids would flock in there. We would sit there and for two cents get a comic book and pass it around. It was a great way to spend a rainy afternoon, reading comics. When we were not doing that, we would go to Saturday matinees. We would see a double feature with a newsreel and a cartoon. We saw such movies as *Beginning of the End*, *Tarantula* and *Them*. All those great black and white bug movies. I grew up right in the middle of when all those movies were coming out. It was pretty wonderful. Then there was the big monster boon of the sixties. Its hard to describe what it was like seeing all these great old monster movies on TV. Every big city had its *Shock Theater* or *Chiller Theater*. In Baltimore we had *Doctor Lucifer*. He would introduce all these old films like *Frankenstein.*



When you were growing up, what was it about the horror movies, and EC Comic Books that appealed to you?
Sometimes I think part of it was the forbiddeness of it. I grew up Catholic. It's a strict denomination. There are very clear borders between heaven and hell, and what you should do and what you shouldn't do. There was just something so naughty and so forbidden for me about monster movies and horror comics. It was kind of a guilty pleasure. If I brought a horror comic book home my mother would throw it out if she found it. It was just nasty stuff to look at, but that was part of the fun.

When did you start drawing?
I've been drawing as long as I can remember. I didn't really get serious about it until I was eleven, when I broke my arm, and had a cast. I got serious about drawing because there was nothing else I could do. I had to just focus on something to kill the boredom. It was then I thought these pictures don't look too bad. At the time, drawing was just a lot of fun. I would come home and draw pictures of the movies I saw. I was a big *Frankenstein* fan. The idea of doing it for a living didn't come until I was about 14 or 15.

I had seen an advertisement for the Famous Artists School. It would have a picture of Norman Rockwell and the ad would say, "We're looking for people who like to draw." So I filled out the coupon and sent it in. I didn't really read it. I just thought, "Wow, it's like art school." They sent a package with a brochure, and that's when I made the connection that you could draw for a living. Before that, it [drawing] was just for my own enjoyment. I ran it by my parents and they didn't have a clue. Their idea of an artist was the guys they saw on the street corner on Sunday afternoon with their paintings set up trying to sell something. They thought being an artist was one step up from being a deadbeat. I started showing them comic books, and saying, "You see these comic books? They don't just happen. Somebody actually draws these pictures." I would show them illustrations and advertisements in magazines and newspapers. Little by little they got the idea. But the idea was just so foreign to them. My mother worked in offices and factories all her life, and my father worked as a steelworker and then became a bus driver. That was what people did in the working class in Baltimore where I grew up. You had jobs like that. You worked during the day, you came home and forgot about it, and you collected your check at the end of the week. I think they thought I was just crazy. I always had the feeling that my parents just didn't know what to make of me.

Your first professional job was as an editorial cartoonist for the Baltimore Sun?
It sounds like a really cool job. In reality it was just a title. There was very little cartooning involved. What I did was photo retouching, most of it for the society page. They would give me black and white photos of say, the bride, and usually it would be the young woman in a white gown and veil against a white background, and I would have to darken the background. Sometimes the photos would be washed out, and you'd have to retouch them. It was a crazy, dull, boring, teeth-grinding job to do. There wasn't a whole lot of actual drawing or cartooning. When it came to that they had guys they preferred to use who were really proficient. I was new, and my stuff was kind of clunky for them. All they really wanted was somebody to do the work these other guys didn't want to do. I was 19 then. This would have been in January of 68. I stayed there for eight months.

How did you break into comics?
Before I started working for the paper, I met a guy who told me about the World Science Fiction Convention in NY. I had enough money saved from summer jobs and such, so I took a train to NY. I met Hal Foster, Frank Frazetta, Jeff Jones, and Mike Kaluta. I started working for the paper, and the following summer I went to the big comic book convention in NY. By San Diego standards it was pretty small, but they had just about every living comic artist there. It was amazing. I met Carmine Infantino, Dick Giordano, Jack

Kirby, and Johnny Craig. I took a bunch of work with me. I had a manila envelope full of drawings. I showed some drawings to Jeff Jones, who showed them to Al Williamson, who showed the drawings to Dick Giordano, who showed the drawings to Carmine Infantino. Carmine, who at the time was a publisher at DC said, "This kid's got potential, we ought to hire him." So a month goes by and Kaluta called, to say that Williamson was trying to get in touch with me because Dick Giordano had called him because Carmine Infantino asked Dick Giordano, "What happened to this kid whose stuff we saw at the convention?" They said, "we'll give you work if you want to move to NY." In less than two weeks, I quit my job,

MICHAEL KALUTA

How did you and Bernie first meet?

Bernie and I met in the Summer of 1967. I had gone to the SCARP Convention in New York City, riding a train into Penn Station with Steve Hickman. It was my first big convention, and Steve and I were meeting up with our pal Steve Harper for an amazing time. Harper had given us the info about the con, and Rich Hauser and Helmut Mueller from Chicago, publishers of Spa-Fon Fanzine would be in attendance. Hickman, Harper and I'd been doing some of our first artwork for Spa-Fon and were looking forward to meeting "the boys." It was also rumored that Frank Frazetta would be attending the convention, there for the Edgar Rice Burroughs' Dum-Dum meeting. This meeting of ERB fans was slated to honor Hal Foster (Prince Valiant and the first Tarzan Daily/Sunday strip artist). Hickman, Harper and I got a room together and "did" the con, staring in amazement at all the neat stuff available. Mostly we hung around Phil Seuling's table. It was there we met up with the Chicago Boys and others... and also where Harper pointed out Roy Krenkel across the room. Man, were we gassed! Then a real little kid came by the table hustling sketches. "This stuff is by Bernie Wrightson. He's here at the convention." We all dropped our jaws looking at this stuff. Who the hell *was* this Out-Of-The-Blue art guy. At that moment Bernie was winning the Best New Talent award and meeting Jeff Jones, all taking place in another area. I can't remember that exact first face-to-face with Bernie, but I remember it came on a wave of his artwork and shy mannerisms. Hickman, Harper and I glued ourselves to Bernie, opening doors and calling out: "Here comes the winner of the Best New Talent award." We were in very high spirits. It was that day or the next that word came from Rich Hauser and The Chicago Boys that we were to meet Frank Frazetta up in his room... all four of us. After getting the room number, we ran up the nine flights to his room rather than wait for the elevator! I also remember, as we approached Frank's door, looking to the side as we hustled past *our* door. Right next to The Man!

Mike Kaluta's interview continues on page 24

packed up all my stuff, and found an awful brownstone apartment and moved in.

What was your parents reaction?
My mother got hysterical. I never really discussed with her the possibility of my moving away. I'm sure she thought I would always be working for the newspaper and living in Baltimore. All of a sudden one day I say, "I'm moving to NY and I'm going to be drawing comic books." I really thought she was going to have a stroke.

Were you freelancing at the time?
I never signed a contract with DC. I was always a freelancer. By the time they got around to offering me an exclusive contract, I had been around long enough to realize I didn't want to do that. I really didn't want to get married to a single book or a single company. The first thing DC gave me was *Nightmaster* which was to appear in Showcase #82. They gave me my own whole comic book. I wasn't ready for it.

What happened with Nightmaster?
I got maybe seven pages into it, and sent the pages in. It was awful stuff. It was really stiff and awkward. I was scared to death I was going to blow it, and it showed in the work. So Carmine literally took me under his arm, brought me into his office and said, "You ain't ready for this kid." So they put me on three page fillers on *House of Mystery* until I was ready to move on. Carmine said, "We'll keep you on this however long it takes, until you feel comfortable, and then we'll move on to longer stories. Eventually onto your own book if you want." At the time, they were doing a lot of anthology work so it was possible to find work to do where you didn't have to be committed to a whole book. It was a very lucky thing at the time, because I was able to pencil and ink my own work. If I had gone into drawing a book of my own I probably wouldn't have been able to do my own inking. I really wanted to do the pencils and inks.

Do you still prefer to ink your own pencils?
Oh yeah. It's a lot easier to just pencil something and let somebody else ink it. But it's almost always a letdown when you see it finished. I look at it, and I think, "They didn't put in even *half* of what I had in mind." Much of it is just shorthand, and I don't put into the pencils what I'll finish in the inking. I've inked other people's pencils so I know that you don't ink what isn't there. If I get something that's very simple and linear that's the way I'm going to ink it. I'm not going to put in shadows and a lot of rendering if it's not indicated by the pencils.

What were your thoughts when you did the initial Swamp Thing story that appeared in House of Secrets #92?
I liked it because it had a monster, swamps, and laboratories. Beyond that I didn't really think about it much. It was the latest job. So I did it and forgot about it, and kept on doing the same thing. Then the next year they decided to do a feature with it. Before that I had done one or two stories of *Nightmaster*, but I had never thought of that as mine. Jerry Grandenetti, who had done the first issue of *Nightmaster* had really set the tone for it. I was just basically copying him. That was just another job. But *Swamp Thing* was the first job where we actually created something; the look of the character and his background and everything.

You did ten issues of Swamp Thing. When you were working on it, did you realize that you were creating something that would endure as long as it has?

I don't think any of us really thought that it would last as long as it did. Obviously, we talked about the commercial strength of it. That it is essentially a superhero comic, but it's going to have horrific overtones, and the superhero is a monster. I think with the first ten issues, we went as far with the character as we could with the limitations we imposed on him. I got tired of it after a while. After ten issues, I thought, "This is like the monster of the month club." You've got to come up with some new foe for Swamp Thing in every issue, and he defeats him. It just kind of wore thin after a while. I think it was after the Batman issue where I didn't think there was anywhere for him to go after that. He's always going to

JOE ORLANDO

What was it about the Swamp Thing concept that interested you?
As a kid, I used to read *The Heap* which had disappeared by that time. I liked the fact that the reason for the existence of the Swamp Thing was environmental concerns, such as the growing of food, and the acceleration of plant life. It was a good solid basis for the character.
What did you think about Bernie drawing Swamp Thing?
I thought he would be perfect for it. I liked his style right from the minute he walked into the office. His drawing was not what it would become, but he had a lot of promise.
What was it about Bernie that you liked right away?
Well his favorite artist at the time was Graham Ingles, and Graham was one of my favorite artists. We had a commonality to start with. He liked the old EC comics so we became friends right away.
Bernie did some work for you while you were editing Plop.
Yes. He did a terrific story for *Plop #1*. It was a story about a glutton who loves frogs' legs, and he was killing thousands of frogs, and eventually they got even with him.
You also worked for EC. What was it that drew you to horror comics?
I was drawn to the sense of humor involved in the story. They weren't as horrific as they were funny. They were intelligently done, and many of the stories were funny. There was a kind of intellect that was brought to comics at EC at that time that wasn't present elsewhere. There was a lot of thought put into it, and everybody was really having a good time. I realized when EC folded that I wasn't having as much fun as I did when I was there, because the scripts weren't as pointed and intelligent as the EC scripts were. And the way that would affect Bernie was that when I became an editor at DC, I brought the same kind of enthusiasm to the material, and that affected the artists I worked with. Bernie was one of the best examples of new talent coming into the field. I think he carried the EC tradition on.

come out on top, he's always going to win, or it'll at least be a draw. We never got to the point with the character, like when Alan Moore came in, and just changed the whole thing. He did such a brilliant job. That would have never occurred to Len and me to do anything like that. Also at the time we couldn't, because the comics' code was very strict. There were *absolute* limitations on what we could do, and what we couldn't do. I think by the time that Alan Moore got into it they had the option of removing the seal, and selling the book as a non-code approved book. That's not an excuse, because Len and I had locked ourselves into this kind of very inflexible character, and Alan Moore just took it to a whole different level.

Swamp Thing and Batman ©& TM 1998 DC Comics. All rights reserved.

Have you followed what's happened with the Swamp Thing character?

Enough to see that this was a direction that never, ever would have occurred to me. The whole idea of having Alec Holland die in the explosion, and having this creature, the Swamp Thing, coming back that's actually a vegetable who believes it's Alec Holland was amazing. It was like everything you read in the first ten books, that's not the way it really happened. From that starting point you can do anything at all. Alan could then use the character and the title as a springboard for almost any horror story he wanted to write.

When you and Len Wein were working on Swamp Thing, was it an equal partnership?

I would say it averaged out to be equal. We would discuss what we wanted to do for a particular issue. We would get together in Joe's [Orlando] office and layout the whole book, page by page. We'd have this three-way discussion. Len would come in with a storyline, and Joe and I would toss ideas out to Len. We went back and forth, and flushed the ideas out. It was a lot of fun. We'd laugh a lot, we'd have a lot of arguments, and it was a very collaborative effort. At the end of the day I'd have a handful of layouts and notes, and go home and pencil it. Then when it was all pencilled Len would dialogue it, then it would be lettered, and then I'd ink it. There was much flexibility about it, a lot of cooperation.

LEN WEIN

How did you first approach Bernie to work on the original Swamp Thing story that appeared in House of Secrets #92?

Bernie and I were at Marv Wolfman's housewarming party, and I had written the script earlier that week. Bernie had just broken up with the lady he was seeing at that time and was all depressed, and I said, "You know I've written a story that has all that kind of feeling in it." He said, "Really?" So I showed him the story. He liked it, and he drew it.

Were you surprised when a title comic book came out of that eight-page story?

You're always surprised when people respond as overwhelmingly as they did to that story. We didn't expect for it to be anything spectacular. We were amazed to discover that *House of Secrets* was DC's best selling book that month. The mail was overwhelmingly positive and DC wanted us to do an ongoing book from the story almost immediately. But since the story was special to Bernie and myself we didn't want to water down the emotional effect of what we had done and so we refused. It took me a year to realize that we could do a *Swamp Thing* book without having to do the Swamp Thing in that story.

Was there any collaboration between you and Bernie after Swamp Thing?

There was a three-issue prestige format miniseries that he and I started, it must have been ten or twelve years ago. We were coming back to *Swamp Thing* in one fell swoop. Bernie just couldn't get back into the character. He did layouts for the first forty-eight pages and froze. He just couldn't continue it, so we abandoned the project. I was heartbroken because it was arguably one of the best stories I've ever done. Since then, elements of the story have been done by other writers, in different ways, so it can't be published now. But yes, we've worked on various things together and I always enjoy working with him.

> *"His work has an amazing grace to it."*

What is your working relationship with Bernie like?

At all times my relationship with Bernie is great. Whenever we work together I find it comfortable, and easy. We think very much alike, and when plotting the issues for Swamp Thing we would finish each other's sentences. We knew just where we were going with it. Overall, it was one of the best collaborations I've had in this business.

What do you think Bernie's strongest point as an artist is?

The power of his work, the humanity. Certainly back in the days of *Swamp Thing*, he had the best ink line in the business. His work has an amazing grace to it.

How did Captain Sternn come about?
I realized when I was working on *Running Out Of Time* for Kitchen Sink that *Captain Sternn* came out of my teenage years, from the movie, The Great Escape. It was always one of my favorite movies. When I was a kid, all my friends identified with the Steve McQueen character, but I was fascinated with the James Garner character, who played a con man. He was a really smooth liar, just this side of being oily. I realized that *Captain Sternn* looks like James Garner from the Great Escape. So I guess that's where it came from.

You've done several book illustrations from Frankenstein to Stephen King. Do you enjoy that type of work?
It's a whole different kind of mindset. You would go about adapting it differently, than say a comic book story. Illustrating is more of augmenting what you're reading. You don't have to concern yourself with storytelling. You can concentrate on the picture itself, and the composition. In a comic book, what's most important is the movement of telling the story, trying to convey as much as possible through pictures. I've always thought that if you can look at a page of comic art, take all the balloons and captions away, and be able to follow what's going on through the pictures then you've done a good job. I'm not saying that you don't need the words or the story, obviously you do, and that comes first. My job is to convey that visually.

What attracted you to the Frankenstein character?
I was just so taken with it. I must have been just at the right age. It was one of those things that took hold of my imagination and stayed there.

Tell us how you first met Stephen King.
I met Stephen King through Chris Zavisa. Chris and I did *A Look Back* and he got an idea to do a calendar with Stephen King. We thought of a werewolf story. There would be a couple of paragraphs of text, an illustration, and a calendar. Chris got a hold of Stephen King somehow, and ran the idea past him. It turned out that Stephen King was a fan of mine from the comics. He liked my work, and he thought it was a good idea. The calendar idea

Captain Sternn or James Garner?
Captain Sternn ©1998 Bernie Wrightson
Art by Wrightson & Hendrix

fell apart because his publisher, thought if anybody was going to do this, they would. So they said no calendar. They agreed to a limited edition small book, with illustrations, so that's where *Cycle of the Werewolf* came from.

Did Stephen King have anything to do with you illustrating the cover for TV Guide?
No. It just fell out of the sky. The *TV Guide*

From Captain Sternn: Running on Empty. Pencils by Bernie Wrightson, inks by Shepherd Hendrix

called one day and said, "Would you like to do a cover?" And I said, "Of course."

Was that fun? It's probably the most exposure you've gotten from a single piece.
It's probably got the largest circulation of any periodical in the country. The interesting thing about it was they had two separate covers. They had the one that I painted, and they also had a Tom Hanks cover. Many places didn't get my cover. The story I got from *TV Guide* was that they didn't want to offend or alarm any of their subscribers with a horrific image. The subscribers were going to get the Tom Hanks cover, but the newsstand copies would be my cover. But it didn't work out that way. Newsstand copies in many different places didn't get my cover. Then two weeks go by, and inside [*TV Guide*] they start advertising that you can buy my cover for ten bucks as a collector's item. Which in equal parts, went up my back and was flattering at the same time.

From Cycle of the Werewolf

The cover did not seem "offensive or alarming."
There was nothing to it. We talked about it, and originally nobody had seen the miniseries, so we didn't know if the hedge animals were going to be in it, or if the guy would be carrying the croquet mallet or an ax. Originally when we talked about it, the guy was supposed to be holding an ax, and they said, "Don't put any blood on the ax." Which of course I understood. I mean it would be in supermarkets with little kids and everything. You want to scare people, but not too much. It's certainly not the best work I've ever done, but geez, it's *TV Guide*.

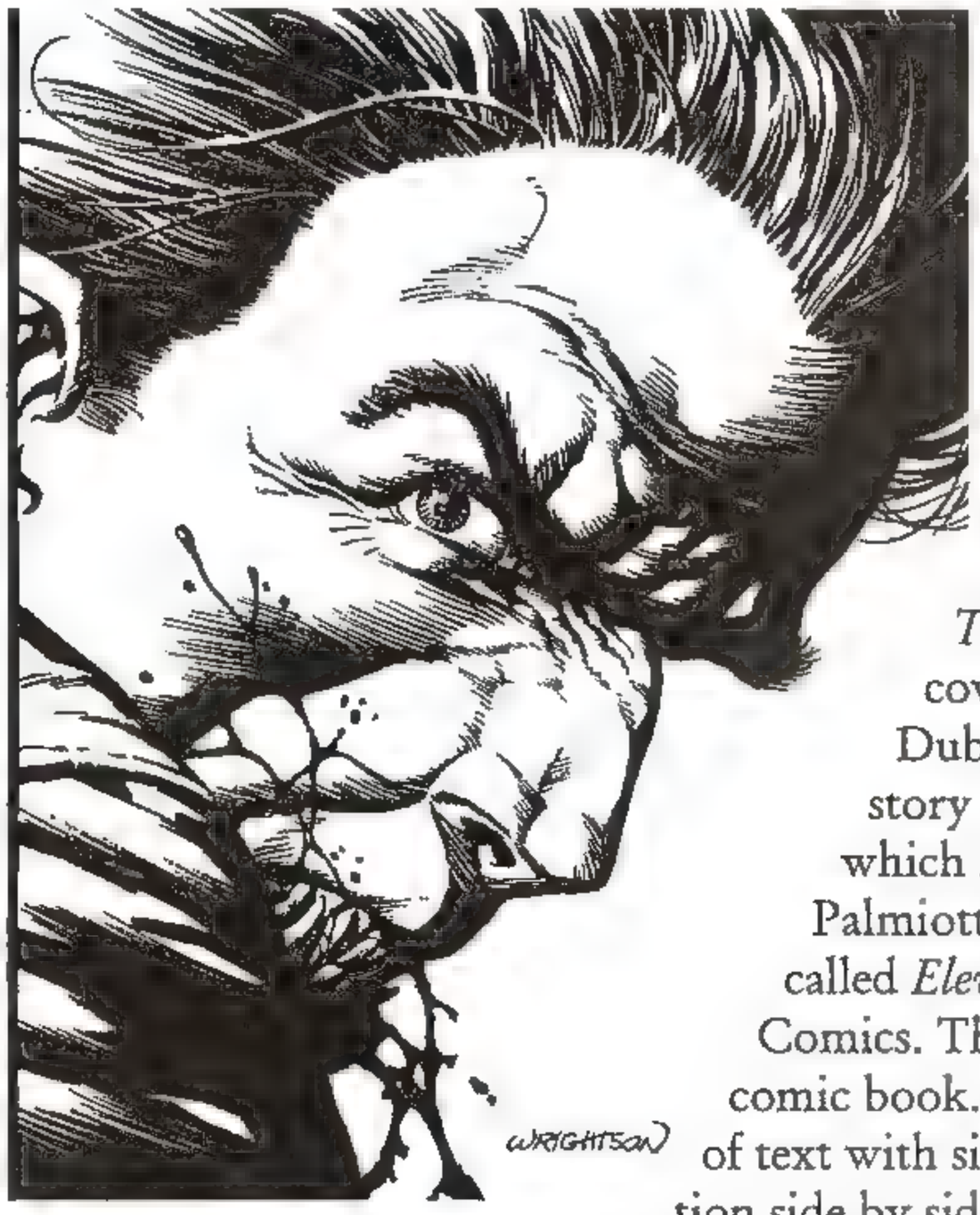
Do you like that painting?
It's okay. I sweated over that painting. I had two weeks to do it, and I spent every minute on it. Now I look at it, and I think it's okay, but I also think it was overworked. Because again, it was like that first issue of *Nightmaster*. I froze up on it. It had to be absolutely perfect.

Do you enjoy painting more than drawing?
I wouldn't say I like one more than the other.

After I've been drawing for a long time, I like to go to painting. I like going back and forth.

Your work has been showcased in many different venues, from comics, to Frankenstein, to phone cards, to a 3-D pop-up book. Did you ever think when you were 18 that your work would be so varied?

If you could go back and ask the eighteen year old, he'd say, "Oh yeah, sure." I can remember thinking while I was doing my crude little chunky figures, "Aha, Frazetta, watch out." I had an ego that was way too big to be supported by my talent. I whittled that down over the years. Now, looking back on it all, it's somewhat overwhelming. It was really weird when the *TV Guide* cover came out because everywhere I went I saw it. That was really strange. It made me kind of uncomfortable. It wasn't like everybody knew me or knew that I was the guy who did the cover. I can't really explain it. It was my painting, and it was everywhere, and it was weird.



Were the Aliens difficult to draw?

It was real slow going. It's a brilliant design, the Alien design, but for me personally it's really hard to draw. There's a lot of fussy little detail that's difficult to draw. If you don't pay attention to every little detail and adhere strictly to that original design, it just doesn't look right. The whole thing falls apart. So every time I had to draw an *Alien* I had to refer back to the originals. I had to go through about twenty pages of reference that I had because nothing showed everything. The angle for the shot I needed wasn't there. I worked real hard not to just copy photographs that I had. I really wanted to make up my own poses, putting them into perspective and into different angles, but it got really hard to do. I'm happy with the way it came out.

What recent projects have you worked on?

In October, Chaos Comics released a four issue series called *Chaos! Nightmare Theater*, and I did the covers. Joy [Mosier-Dubinsky] and I also did a story for the first book which is inked by Jimmy Palmiotti. We did a book called *Eleven Eleven* for Crusade Comics. That wasn't a typical comic book. It was sixteen pages of text with sixteen pages of illustration side by side. The projects that Joy and I have worked together on, I like so much that I don't even want to adapt it to a comic book format. I also wrote and drew a *Hulk* story that appeared in *Shadows & Light #1.*

Where do you feel you are professionally in your career right now?

I'm kind of at a crossroads right now. I spent the last two years doing *Batman/Aliens*, and spent the last year of that wishing it was over.

As I was finishing that up, I told myself, I don't want to take on another miniseries, or another whole book for a while. I have some things in mind, that maybe I would like to do but a lot of it is long-term stuff, like a big project or a continuing series. Which on the one hand is

RON MARZ

How long have you known Bernie?
The first time I met Bernie was during my senior year in high school. I interviewed him for the school newspaper. Then a couple of years later I did another interview with Bernie for my college newspaper. That was a few weeks before Bernie's annual Halloween party, and he invited me to the party. We have been on friendly terms ever since.

What have you worked on with Bernie?
The prequel to Batman/Aliens published by Dark Horse, Batman/Aliens published by DC, and a six-page Wildstorm Chamber of Horror's story.

How did the Batman/Aliens project come about?
Bernie called me up one day and said, "I've got something I want to talk to you about." We had dinner, and he said he had in mind to do a Batman/Vampire story. He had details, and he wanted me to write it. Basically he was ready to do another good sized project. I thought it was a good idea. We had been friends for a number of years, and hadn't gotten to work together. We were both busy working on other projects at the time, so we put it on the back burner. Then on the way home from one of the New York conventions, Bernie was driving, and we got to talking about the project again. I suggested that if he wanted to do a Batman/monster story, why don't we skip to the top of the pack and do a Batman/Aliens story? I knew from Dan Jurgens that he had Superman/Aliens in the works at the time, but it hadn't been released yet. The idea tickled Bernie's fancy. We both threw some different things into the plot in terms of flushing out the story, and then we approached Dark Horse with it.

You got away with breaking some of the rules concerning the Aliens.
Oh yeah. We approached Bob Schreck at Dark Horse whom Bernie knew. Bob was very excited about it, and thought it was a great story, but said that there were a few problems with it. Twentieth Century Fox has an Aliens bible that states you can't bring the Aliens to Earth, you can't do an Aliens story set in a time before the first movie, and a number of other lesser restrictions. Our story broke more than half of their restrictions. However Bob said he thought the story was good, and he would send it in to Twentieth Century Fox and we would see what would happen. Fox came back and said, "This is great. Go with it." I guess they gave us enough rope to hang ourselves.

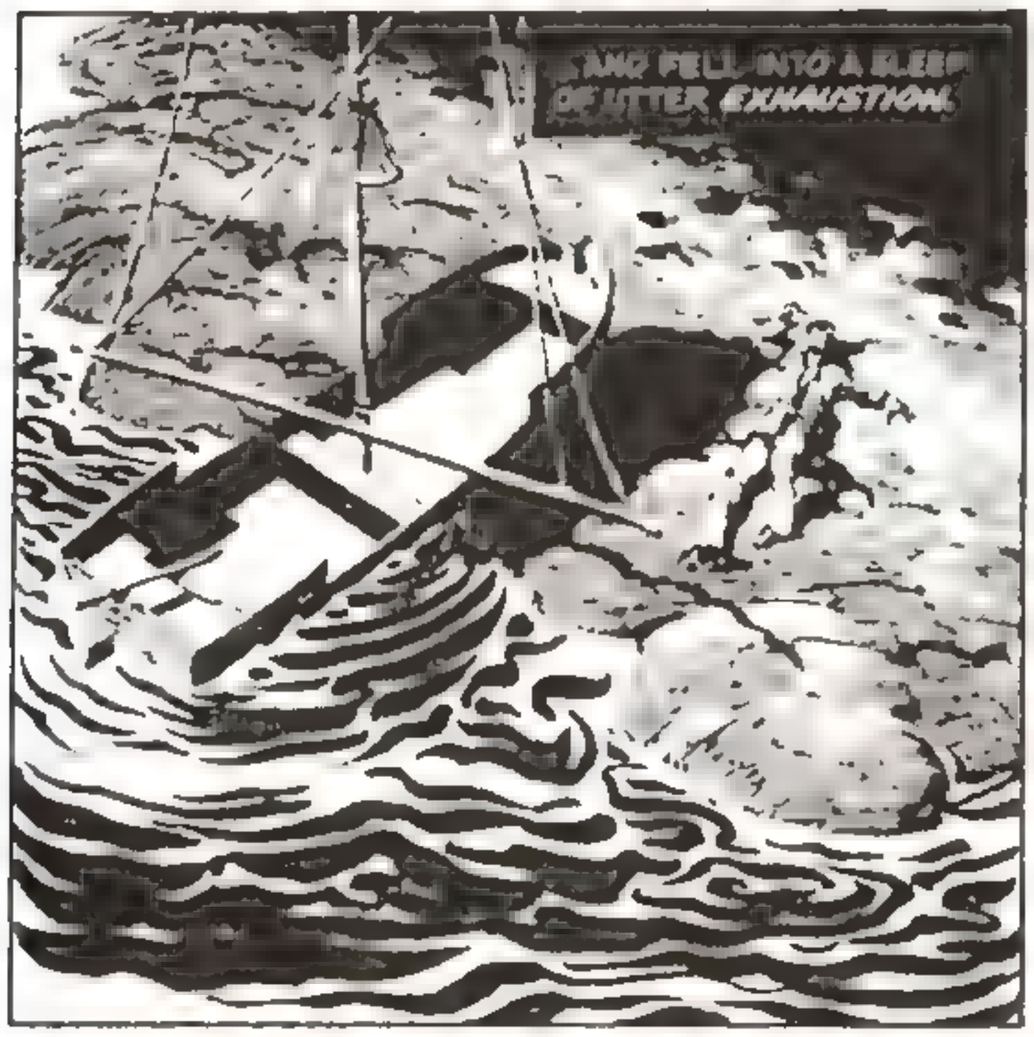
intriguing and exciting and on the other hand I think, do I really want to put the next five or ten years of my life into this? Right now I want to pick up some little things and figure out where I want to go from there.

You've been called "The Master of the Macabre." Do you ever feel boxed in by that?
Well, that's somebody else's term. I really do enjoy what I'm doing. I'm never going to get into painting calendar girls, or drawing westerns. It's not like I'm doing something just to put bread on the table. It's never been like that. I watched a special on PBS called "The Man Who Drew Bug-eyed Monsters." It was about the artist who did the posters for all the horror movies in the fifties, like *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *Giant Mantis*, and *This Island Earth*. He was a great artist, and did a lot of terrific work. He got very burnt out and disillusioned doing this, and at the height of his popularity he just left, walked away, quit Hollywood, moved out west and became a western painter. I've never been like that. I don't do horror because it's really trendy. I really love doing horror and the creepy macabre stuff. I've got a really twisted sense of humor. A lot of the stuff I do is funny to me on some level. A lot of the horror work I do kind of crosses that line between being really revolting and being funny on some level.

Have you ever regretted doing a particular work?
A few things. Occasionally I look back on something and think, what was I thinking? There are a few things that I'm really proud of, and for the most part everything else is okay.

What would those few things be?
Frankenstein. Swamp Thing. Not a whole lot of stuff considering all the work I've done over the last thirty years.

We've seen your name spelled Berni and Bernie. Why is that?
It's 1968. I knew I wanted to work professionally in the art profession. I was watching TV and the Olympics were on. Here's this guy diving, his name comes up on the screen, and it's Bernie Wrightson. I thought, "This is going to be a problem." Here are two Bernie Wrightsons in the world, and I thought I was the only one. This guy wins the gold medal. I say to myself, "Johnny Weissmuller won the gold medal." This guy's going to be famous. People are going to be asking me, "Are you the Bernie Wrightson from the Olympics?" I thought, "This guys probably not going to change his name. I'm going to change mine." So I took the e off of Bernie. And of course the other Bernie Wrightson kind of faded away. So there I was stuck with Bernie without an e. People thought I was a woman. They were always wondering what's the deal with this funny name? They thought I was being artsy. It got to the point where it was kind of embarrassing. Finally, after never hearing from this other Bernie Wrightson, I put the e back on. ❖



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From Eleven Eleven

JOY MOSIER-DUBINSKY

What projects have you worked on with Bernie?
Eleven Eleven, Chaos! Nightmare Theater, and a short story for White Wolf publishing called Caveat Shatner that appeared in an anthology called *Dark Destiny III: Children of Dracula*. Bernie illustrated the story and did the cover for the book.
Tell us about Chaos! Nightmare Theater.
That was a really interesting situation. It started as a text story that Bernie was going to adapt for comics, panel to panel. But when he read the story he liked it so much that he didn't want to change the flow of the story. He didn't want to take it into a panel to panel situation with word balloons. Bernie broke the text down into blocks so that the short story would be there in its entirety. The artwork itself is wonderful. Bernie's pencils were gorgeous, and Jimmy Palmiotti's inking was marvelous. The original story was great. It just didn't happen to get printed that way.
The artwork in Eleven Eleven was just pencils with no inks. How did that come to be?
It was supposed to be inked by Tim Bradstreet, but with time constraints and such we wound up just going with the pencils. It worked out really well. I think it made the book a little more distinctive.
How did you meet Bernie?
I was moving to Chicago, and Lee Tennant, whom I was working for, was going to pick me up at the airport. The day I moved to Chicago, Bernie was coming in for a store signing. I'd landed at O'Hare airport at 6:30 in the morning. Lee, God love him, decided not to pick me up until Bernie landed at about 10:30. I wandered O'Hare airport for four hours. Fortunately at that time you could still smoke in airports. He [Bernie] got off the plane and we met but we didn't really talk until we got to the parking garage and I asked Lee if I could smoke in the van, and he said, "Well, that's entirely up to Bernie." So I turn around to ask Bernie, "Would you mind if I smoke?" and he's furiously trying to get his lighter to work. From that point on we just never shut up. At the time, I had no clue who he was.
What was your first impression of his work?
I read Captain Sternn first, which I thought was very witty. I thought the word plays and puns were really delightful, but it's unlike most of his other work. When I saw some of his other work my first impression was "Oh my God! You did this?" It was like meeting some sort of God; this tremendously talented man that is very normal and a lot of fun, and he's just Bernie. I think I'm very fortunate that I knew Bernie the guy before I knew Bernie the capital letter guy. I was completely blown away. This is something that always surprises people when I say that I don't think that Frankenstein is the best of his illustrations. There's a piece called *Toccata in Fugue*, it's this guy sitting at an organ, and it's my absolute favorite piece. It's a pencil piece, and I know Bernie is known for his inking, but for me, I enjoy his pencils a lot more than his inking.
What are you working on now?
Currently I'm working on an Ed Gein story for Chanting Monks Studios. Again, it's not in a traditional comic book format. It's somewhat like a magazine article and it's very ironic. It's sort of tongue in cheek and goofy and poking fun at this very grisly crime spree of his. Bernie will be doing spot illustrations for that.

PAMELA HAZELTON

From Eleven Eleven

What do you feel is Bernie's strongest point as an artist?

Bernie has the awesome ability to take something unbelievable, and make you believe (and sometimes really hope) it does exist. In many horror style pieces, he takes the gore, and mixes it with realism, leaving you with some "thing" you really wouldn't want to wake up next to.

Tell us about the upcoming project Bernie will be doing for Chanting Monks Studio?

Joy and Bernie are collaborating on an Ed Gein story, to be published in the latter part of 1998. Joy is writing the twenty-plus-page story, aptly subtitled: "What A Lovely Mother You Have...Does She Come in My Size?" The text story will be illustrated by Bernie.

Bernie is likely the best artist for the story, because he'll most definitely succeed at taking the writer's words and wrapping them into a neat little package—an illustration—for us.

What fans can look forward to is a tale of fact and horror, written by one of the top up and coming writers in this industry, and illustrated by a man best known for compelling artwork.

michael KALUTA

What happened when you met Frank Frazetta?

I recall now it *had* to be the second day, because when we entered Frank and Ellie's room, Frank was on the floor, trying to plug in the TV so his kids could watch Saturday Morning Cartoons. There we stood, Bernie, Steve Hickman, Steve Harper and I, all with our portfolios under our arms, like a Chinese Shooting Gallery (I've *no* idea where that expression comes from, but it fits... we were in "The Presence.") Frank looked at all our work, and I have to say that I only remember the art Bernie showed him. Frank gave us all words of advice, all lost on the wind, but he was clearly enthused with Bernie's work. Bernie gave Frank an original, and Frank unlimbered a stack of Johnny Comet Sunday Page originals and had Bernie take his pick..... Whew!

The rest of the Con was all of us hanging out together, walking the NYC streets and, at one time, visiting Jeff Jones' home/studio up in the neighborhood we would all eventually call home.

What do you feel is Bernie's strongest point as an artist?

The point of his brush or pen! There's never been, to my knowledge, a Brush man that could hold a candle to what Bernie's laid down, and, though Bernie used to complain that he couldn't use a pen, I doubt there's anyone alive today who could top the penwork Bernie showed the world in his Frankenstein plates and his pen-oriented Comic Stories for Warren Publications (Creepy/Eerie).

Of the projects Bernie has done do you have a favorite and if so, what is it and why?

My favorite Wrightson work falls into two categories: the stuff that has sentimental value and meaning (not always the strongest in drawing quality), and the Work we all know and love as Top Wrightson: The Frankenstein Plates, Swamp Thing, Creepy and Eerie Stories. One has to remember Bernie and I were roommates/studiomates for a number of years, and I was watching over his shoulder as much of his terrific art was conceived and executed, so I have a mix of admiration and sense memory that swaths much of his work from 1968 to 1985. Perhaps the Absolute Best Wrightson Comic Art can be found in the story Bernie did for Plop magazine for DC Comics. I can't recall the title, but the story was about a gourmand who delighted in eating Frog Legs, and he eventually has to pay dearly for his appetite.

"I doubt there's anyone alive today who could top the penwork Bernie showed the world in his Frankenstein plates and his pen-oriented Comic Stories for Warren Publications."

You mentioned being studiomates with Bernie. Over twenty years later, what are your thoughts on the time you spent at The Studio with Bernie, Barry Windsor Smith, and Jeff Jones?

MICHAEL

The Studio, in its time, reflected the personality of all four artists. We all did a lot of growing as artists and the proximity of sharing the space affected all of us in very subtle ways. A reflective observation may shed light into the interaction of all the Studio mates.

The Studio was the idea of Barry Windsor-Smith, and he got Bernie and Jeff interested right away, while I had to be courted away from my little apartment. I moved into the studio, sleeping on the floor most nights, and over time bringing almost my entire apartment into my studio space. It was the only way I found I could get work done. And that work was accomplished mostly from 5PM until 8-9 AM. At about 7-8AM, Jeffrey Jones would arrive to work until about 8PM, when he'd leave for home. Bernie generally arrived around 10AM and always put in a full day's work, leaving between 7PM and midnight. Barry was wont to arrive just past noon, sometimes as late as 2PM. His work day would generally last from lunchtime through dinner and then he'd work until midnight at the least. All times are approximate. The three years of the Studio were adjusted by the workload and inspiration of the artists. Only I got time alone in the Studio. Time I needed to think, goof off, nap or actually work. Each of the artists produced at least *one* terrific piece or series during the Studio days, as is reflected in the book, The Studio. The art was generally done without comment from the other artists, except when one got into a bind and needed a fresh outlook. Often that outlook served as a balance for a completely different idea to be born. The two real group art efforts in The Studio were the Slide Presentations, assembled for conventions when all the artists' new work was presented, one after another in a scripted show, and, of course, the assembling of The Studio Book.

As opposed to seeing The Studio as a whole, my best memories of The Studio are of the separate artist's efforts: there were times when each man would be "into" his work, deeply involved, and the rest of The Studio walked softly, so as not to disturb the event. Again, being the only guy there all night, I was able to see the accomplished work as it lay on the various drawing boards. Looking back at those quiet nights and pieces of art that would soon win the admiration of many future fans is one of my most priceless memories of The Studio days. ❖

ROGER PRICE

How long Has Bernie been attending the Mid Ohio Con?

Four years and counting.

What does it mean to you, and to the fans, to have Bernie return so often?

Wow. What can I say? To have a true master of the illustrated art form as a "regular" guest is a true honor for Mid-Ohio-Con and an absolute delight for the attending fans. Best of all, in the time we have worked together, I have gotten to know Bernie and am blessed to be able to count him among my friends.

What is your favorite Bernie Wrightson project?

There are so many! The first time I became fully aware of Bernie Wrightson, was through *Swamp Thing*. It was then that I began searching out any and every project of his that I could. Like so many others I have to say *Frankenstein* is just a stunning piece of work and one of my many favorites.

TONY ISABELLA

In your review of Shadows &Light you wrote "I'd have to pick Bernie Wrightson's untitled Hulk story as my favorite of the issue. It was just so darned Bernie, right down to the wry ending." To you, what ingredients are needed to make a story "just so darned Bernie?" Three words: monsters, humanity, humor.

What do you feel is Bernie's strongest point as an artist?

Three words...oh, wait, I did that already. Bernie doesn't have one strongest point. He draws incredibly well. He knows story. He's an original.

Of the projects Bernie has done do you have a favorite and if so what is it and why?

Swamp Thing or his *Frankenstein* book.

Do you have a favorite Bernie Wrightson anecdote that you could share with us?

Decades ago, before I started working for Marvel and as Bernie was getting started in the field, we were both at a Detroit Triple Fan Fair. A bunch of us were gathered in my hotel room to celebrate Arvell Jones' birthday.

We were playing "Poses," wherein we would contort our bodies into figures drawn by various artists: Steve Ditko, Jack Kirby, and so on. Bernie decided he would do this "Barry Smith/Conan leap"...and proceeded to launch himself across the room's two beds. Just as I was putting Arv's birthday cake onto the furtherest of the bed. I didn't see him coming. As I turned and put the cake on the bed, Bernie landed right on top of it. I can still hear his horrified wail,

"Isabella! What have you done to me?"

Shadows & Light, and The Hulk ©& TM Marvel Comics 1998. All Rights Reserved.

THE MUCK MONSTER

BUT I RESENTED HIM! I RESENTED HIS PRESUMPTION UPON A HIGHER POWER. I RESISTED HIS ATTEMPTS ON MY BEING!
I DID NOT WANT LIFE! SO I DID NOT RECEIVE IT!

AND MY CREATOR RAGED.
HE TURNED OFF HIS MACHINES AND SCREAMED AT MY LIFELESS FORM. HE CURSED ME FOULLY! THOROUGHLY! HE BLAMED ME FOR HIS FAILURE!
BUT I DID NOT WANT HIS GIFT OF CREATION. I REJECTED IT. I HAD NO PLACE IN THE WORLD OF MEN.
I KNEW NOT WHAT I WAS. I ONLY KNEW THAT I SHOULD NOT BE.

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THE

INFLUENCE

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Growing up you were a fan of Bernie Wrightson, Jack Kirby, and Gene Colan.
I was a fan of anyone who was really definitive. I wasn't as interested as much in the guys who did house styles because they all just looked the same. To be honest I didn't like Bernie's art when I first saw it. I *really* didn't like it. I was maybe nine or ten years old, and at that time my family split time at North Lake Tahoe. There was no television or no radio because of the mountains and my Dad would buy one of every comic book at the local 7-11. It sounds like a dream for most kids, but for me it was a living hell up there. In that group was Wrightson's work in short stories and *Swamp Thing*. I read it, and it kept snowing so I read it again, and it stuck with me. Pretty soon within a two week period, I loved it. He was the best. Then I began to put it all together. Beyond all of the other artists, there was so much atmosphere, and I wondered how did he do that? I would notice, for example, when he would render trees, houses, or people that he would use a different technique, different brush strokes. I didn't know those things then, I just knew he worked differently on different objects. I had a predilection towards horror anyway, and his work really got under my skin. There's some stuff he did that really got to me. It wasn't because I thought the drawing was bad that I didn't like it, it was that it was scary.

Do you remember anything in particular of Bernie's that really stands out in your memory?
Yeah, I remember the little freaks in

kelley JONES

> "Bernie transcends comic books."

Swamp Thing #2 and #10. Those weird little things bothered me to no end. I also loved his shots of forests and swamps. The lonely places he could do so well. They have so much atmosphere, whether the main character was on the page or not, I believed the world he was setting. To me, the mark of a great artist isn't the technical aspect of art, it's somebody who makes me believe in every panel, that they're evoking this world. Bernie's work was eccentric, not in the respect that he was eccentric, but in that he mirrored the eccentricities you saw in the world. He put so much soul into these people, that when bad things happened you believed it. Every time I looked at a job of his it was like a brand new Wrightson. You would look at his work, and it was different from the last piece, and the piece you were looking at would be different from the next piece. There are so few people you can say that about in any media. He seemed to do that effortlessly.

What really struck you about Swamp Thing #7 with Batman?
Batman is a character that I really didn't have much thought about one way or the other. Bernie took and put

the intimidation into Batman. This is a character that through his depiction is intimidating without doing anything. Actually, Batman is more impressive than Swamp Thing because he's so mysterious. Bernie had him fading in and out of shadows, blending in with the background, and I just thought that was wild. That was for me, a seminal event, one that you remember and file away. Not just that it was a good art job, but it was definitive. It shows you don't need to handle a character for five or six years, you can define the character in a handful of panels. Bernie is associated with Batman even though he did very little with the character.

You've been influenced by Bernie's work.
Oh definitely. But beyond even the art. I am a very big fan of horror film, horror fiction, and things along those lines. So what he also meant to me was that he defined himself first and foremost as a horror artist and I'd never heard that term before. He came along and he was defined as a superlative horror artist. This was a guy who was so defined in the seventies as being that. In the early eighties, when I first broke into comics, there were no horror comics. I felt at that point, I'm either going to do this or I'm not. I got a lot of strength from what Bernie said in *A Look Back*. It quit being the drawings. The drawings are ingrained in your head, you don't even need to see them anymore, they're there. The key was these great words he said about being what he was, and this was what he wanted and that's what he conveyed and you just stick with it. That's when I went and pulled up stakes and did Deadman for DC. When I was at DC, I realized that's what I wanted to be, a guy who works in the horror genre. One very practical reason, was that no one else was doing it. Everyone else wanted to do the X-men, and other superhero titles, but I wanted to do horror. It paid off because in the years that followed, a lot of those guys were out of the business, or their work has been forgotten. Whereas I've been very lucky, in the respect that a lot of the stuff I've done is still hanging around. I knew right from the start that I had made the right decision because I felt very comfortable doing the work. What Bernie did for artists following him in the genre was show that you had to be able to draw everything well and convincingly. You had to be able to draw five or six pages of atmosphere and storytelling to get to the punchline. With superhero stuff it's just guys flexing their muscles and standing around and that kind of thing. I got very very impressed with the fact that Bernie was so well rounded. He can draw anything. I wanted to be that kind of artist. So Bernie really was the standard in horror. I ultimately decided that I needed to follow in his footsteps philosophically as well as artistically. Take it very seriously and attempt to become an artist beyond the comic book end of it. Because to me, Bernie transcends comic books.

Do you think comic book artists today approach their work differently than artists of twenty or thirty years ago?
Frazetta, Williamson, and Wally Wood are greats to me. These guys all had one thing in common, they understood how to be terrific artists in black and white, before they were ever covered. That's where I would draw a line between most comic book artists and artists who draw comics. You could reprint everything Wrightson did in black and white and it would look great. I don't feel that Wrightson ever passed off anything to the next guy. To me, I always think of him as such a complete artist. He can do everything well. With most

artists, it's never the whole package. With Wrightson it *is* the whole package. Wrightson makes it seem so effortless, and I know that if it looks that effortless, it must have taken a lot of work. He never came across as pretentious to me. When I was growing up and just being a fan he was always self-effacing, very quiet, and never bragged about what he did. He was always complimentary to so many other people.

A lot of these guys today are just so derivative it's depressing. When you see the skill levels of Wrightson or Kaluta, it's just phenomenal.

It used to mean something when you did a full page spread. When Wrightson did a full page spread of the *Werewolf* it meant something. It was something I remember we all talked about. "Wow! Did you see that?" Now, it's done so much that it's trite. In fact, I made a goal in *Batman* to never do a full page spread. I did one full page spread in the *Swamp Thing* [Batman #522] issue, but that was as a total love letter to Wrightson. But I made a point that there were no full page spreads. I would avoid them every step of the way, because they were done everywhere else.

GREETINGS.
THE MAN YOU KNEW AS WILCOX IS GONE. I AM THAT WHICH YOU CALL "THE HAMMER." I HAVE ALTERED THE BODY TO SUIT MY PURPOSES.
MY HEROS WILL BE MANY, AND I SHALL REQUIRE YOUR SERVICE. I HOPE THAT ALL OF US ARE UP TO THE TASK.
WHAT TASK?
TO BRAIN WITH...
...I DESIRE A CHEESEBURGER.
TO BE CONTINUED...
The Hammer ©& TM 1998 Kelley Jones. All rights reserved.

You mentioned working in black and white. Would you like to have done an issue of Batman in black and white?

I'd love to. If I had my druthers, that's what I'd do. I was one of those guys who wanted to work for Warren when they were around. When you spend a lot of time building your style, in terms of how to render things, and how you create texture, you're thinking in terms of how to give gradations in white and black. Wrightson would work his white lines into the black areas, and the black lines into the white areas, and also be able to leave quality negative space, to really punch a point. You really see the skill. You don't see that too much anymore. You see people trying to evade how much work a page takes, but with Bernie, it would always be an incredibly well crafted page. The most I think you can ask for in comics is that ten years after you've done a job people still remember it. I can remember Bernie's work from thirty years ago.

You can remember it as clearly now as when you saw it the first time.

I'll tell you why. It's not out of nostalgia. When you remember Wrightson it's very fresh because it was head and shoulders ahead of it's time, it's like a mountain today.

In your four-issue miniseries The Hammer published by Dark Horse, where would you say your influences come from?

From many different places. This is really what I'm all about, not just the drawing and the story but how it's colored and how it looks; the whole thing. To me, I'm not doing anything new, I think I'm doing a 1973 comic book in 1997. The number one thing I wanted to put into it was a lot of fun. Each issue is a separate story unto itself which is very much from *Swamp Thing*. You knew each issue would have Alec Holland but each story was a separate story unto itself. That's what I wanted to do. I didn't want people to feel locked in, that they had to buy this mega-epic.

Swamp Thing ®& TM 1998 DC Comics. All rights reserved.

Swamp Thing from Batman # 522. Pencils by Kelley Jones, inks by John Beatty.

My biggest fear is that someone wouldn't care. I don't care if they love it or they hate it I just don't want them to not care. Every artist I ever loved, there was a large contingent of people that said they sucked, and there was a large contingent of people that loved them. When the years were all done, those were the people that everyone remembered, and nobody didn't like them. I have friends now who didn't like Wrightson's stuff back in the seventies, and now they worship him. The best letters I get are from people who say, "I didn't like what you did, but I really like it now." That's what Wrightson did to me. I always figured that's the mark of being on the right track. You force an opinion, and then maybe after a time, they're convinced that you were right.

You pencilled some Swamp Thing issues in the latest series?

I did issue 94 and part of 100. I wanted to remind everyone of Bernie Wrightson. So I made an effort not to look at his stuff because that'll knock your socks off. I kept thinking atmosphere, and style, and hopefully people would go back and look at Wrightson's work. Because at the time that I was doing it, I'm sure there were a lot of people who hadn't seen those first great ten issues. ❖

DREW HAYES

What is it about Bernie Wrightson's work that influenced you?
Too much to really mention. Bernie's work has this flow and bounce that just sucks you in. You know you're looking at a drawing, but somehow it's ethereal. His understanding of light and dark and mood is supernatural. I first saw his work in *Swamp Thing* and realized that even though this was a comic, it was not drawn by a comic hack- this was a real artist drawing a comic. It was the first significant, defining moment to me as young artist that it was okay to kick some ass with a pen.
What do you feel is Bernie's strongest point as an artist?
I already mentioned his understanding of light, dark, mood- his flow. His influences taught him well—Frank Booth, Joseph Clement Coll. These guys, as well as Bernie, have a way of making an incredible drawing look like it was done in one stroke, clean. When Bernie draws a storm, it feels like you're about to get rained on. Sometimes I look at *Frankenstein* and become moved and inspired. Sometimes it makes me want to quit.
Of the projects, Bernie has done what is your favorite?
It may not be original but *Frankenstein*, as a whole work.

MIKE PASCALE

What was the first work of Bernie's that you remember seeing?
Swamp Thing #7 with *Batman*. I got that off the stand. I was amazed at both the wonderful use of light and shadow that Bernie's so great at, as well as the outlandish rendering of *Batman*. I had never seen him rendered like that before, with the two foot long ears, and the *Spawn*-like cape, which was really cool, especially when you're a little kid. I remember thinking, it kinda doesn't look like *Batman*, but boy, does he look cool. It was great too because it was a self-contained story.
Of all Bernie's work, what is your favorite?
Asking your favorite Bernie Wrightson work is like asking me my favorite Kirby or Frazetta work. A few things stand out, like the *Monsters Coloring Book* which came out in the seventies, the *Frankenstein* book, which was probably one of the best things done in comic book history, and his whole run on *Swamp Thing*.
How did his artwork influence your style?
Well, I know I discovered Bernie after Kirby, and they are two very diverse styles. Kirby was all action and power, and Bernie was mood and lighting. That's where his biggest influence was. I would try to draw in his style, and use a lot of black, and shadow. I would just try to figure out how all that worked. It's a great thing to learn from. I've read in interviews where he's admitted that anatomy was not his strongest point, and that he faked a lot of it, but to me he always made up for it with his knowledge of form, shadow and lighting. Another thing he was so great at which sadly these days most people don't know, was that he was doing the black and white style long before Frank Miller. Twenty years ago, Bernie was using heavy black with minimal or no outline. There were illustrators before Bernie that were doing it, but Bernie was one of the first guys that brought it into comics, he and Alex Toth. Bernie was such a great artist, and so much better than so many before him.

STEVEN TICE

What is it about Bernie Wrightson's work that influenced you?
Well, the sheer talent, of course. Bernie Wrightson possesses great skill at drawing, pacing, and laying out a page. He's also something of an original, whose style has since influenced many other artists, Kelley Jones for example. I'm sure there's some Wrightson-inspired rendering and shading in my own artwork.

What do you feel is Bernie's strongest point as an artist?
His affinity for the horror genre would be the obvious choice in this regard. He has developed a style that really lends itself to that subject matter and set the standards for that genre, at least in comics.

Of the projects Bernie has done, do you have a favorite?
Yes. *Frankenstein*. This is the ultimate in Wrightson artwork. The only drawback to *Frankenstein* is that it isn't in comic book form, and therefore doesn't demonstrate Bernie's skills in that medium. But for sheer drawing excellence within his primary genre, nothing else comes close. I would rather see one *Frankenstein* from Bernie every ten years than any number of *Batman: The Cults or Punisher: P.O.V.s*.

From Captain Stern: Running on Empty. Pencils by Bernie Wrightson, inks by Shepherd Hendrix

PRO FILES

MARK WHEATLEY

What is it about Bernie Wrightson's work that influenced you?
Bernie was one of a small group of comics artists who broke into the field at a time when only the old, established artists were working. Along with Mike Kaluta, Jeff Jones, Bruce Jones, and Ralph Reese, Bernie opened the door for exciting, young ideas and energy in comics. These guys also had something else in common that I found inspiring, and that was their obvious affection for the traditions of comics. They knew their comics history, and that knowledge showed. Bernie's attention to story-telling, gesture, shadow and character design all invited me to explore the work of other artists such as Jack Davis, Harvey Kurtzman, Wally Wood, Graham Ingles, Lou Fine and Will Eisner. In spite of these obvious influences in his work, he had created his own, very personal style. His early work was at it's best when it combined a sense of humor with a deady, ugly horror. It was in this work that Bernie showed something that had grown all too rare in comics — he showed a burning passion, an intense love for his comics and his horror stories that has never been matched. The comic book industry has had other intense creators — but none of them have brought his wonderful sense of humor to the work. And without that sense of humor, horror comics can't reach me.

What do you feel is Bernie's strongest point as an artist?
Bernie is a master of form, shadow, and gesture. But his greatest strength in comics is his near-perfect sense of timing. He has applied the timing of a comedian to drama and elevated it to a new level. And he has not paid me to say this!

Of the projects Bernie has done, do you have a favorite and if so what is it and why?
For a story he wrote *and* drew: *Uncle Bill's Barrel*. For an epic, perfectly told: *Swamp Thing*. For sheer illustration beauty: *Frankenstein*.
What projects have you and Bernie worked on together?
I was the editor of *Blood of Dracula*. It ran 19 issues from Apple Comics a few years ago. I dug up all of Bernie's rejected and unused *Frankenstein* work, going way back to our fanzine days and with Bernie's help, ran it as a feature in the comic, along with a number of reprints of Bernie's strips. Bernie also did a new cover for one issue that I painted and I also painted an older piece of his for an issue of a spin-off; *Death Dreams of Dracula*. The *Frankenstein* pages were collected into a book called *The Lost Frankenstein Pages* from Apple. Going *way* back, I published two of his illustrations in my old fanzine (1968-74) *Nucleus*, a spot illustration and a cover of *King Kull*.

WHO ARE THEY?

Drew Hayes Creator of *Poison Elves* originally published by Mulehide Graphics. Now being published by Sirius Entertainment.

Pamela Hazelton Editor for Chanting Monks Studios.

Tony Isabella "America's most beloved comic-book writer and columnist." He is a regular columnist in the Comic Buyer's Guide and he has his own daily online column. He is the creator of Black Lightning.

Kelley Jones Current penciller on Batman. He has also worked on two Batman graphic novels and several miniseries for DC. He just had his own miniseries, *The Hammer*, published by Dark Horse Comics.

Michael Kaluta An artist whose work, like Bernie's, transcends comic books. In comics, he is probably best known for his work on *The Shadow*.

Ron Marz He has written *Silver Surfer* for Marvel Comics, *X-O Manowar* for Acclaim Comics, and *Green Lantern* for DC. He also co-wrote the DC vs Marvel miniseries.

Joy Mosier-Dubinsky Described as "one of the top up and coming writers" in comics, she has written several comic book and short stories.

Joe Orlando Early in his career was an artist at EC. In the 1960's he became an editor at DC Comics. He was an editor at *Mad Magazine* before recently retiring. He is now a consultant for DC Comics.

Mike Pascale Creator of Bru-Hed and Nasti: Monster Hunter.

Roger Price Founder and director of Mid-Ohio-Con.

Steve Tice Publisher/editor of *Musings*. This title is slated to be relaunched this year, most likely from Calliope Comics.

Len Wein A writer in this industry for over thirty years. Len co-created Swamp Thing with Bernie. He has written numerous titles for both DC and Marvel Comics.

Mark Wheatley Currently working on X-Files books for Topps. He has also completed a two part Legends of the Dark Night story which he wrote and drew.

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❑Whoa! You mean I missed an issue?! Send me Joe's issue! Please send me Comic Book PROFILES magazine issue #1 featuring Joe Kubert. Enclosed is my check or money order for $3.50 ($2.50 + $1.00 s/h) made payable to : As You Like It Publications.

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Even if you do not wish to subscribe at this time, please take a moment and answer our survey. Thanks!

What three comic book writers would you like to sèe in Comic Book PROFILES?

What three artists would you like to see in Comic Book PROFILES?

What did you enjoy most about Comic Book PROFILES?

Suggestions:

Please send all correspondence to: As You Like It Publications, P.O. Box 2055 Poughkeepsie NY 12601

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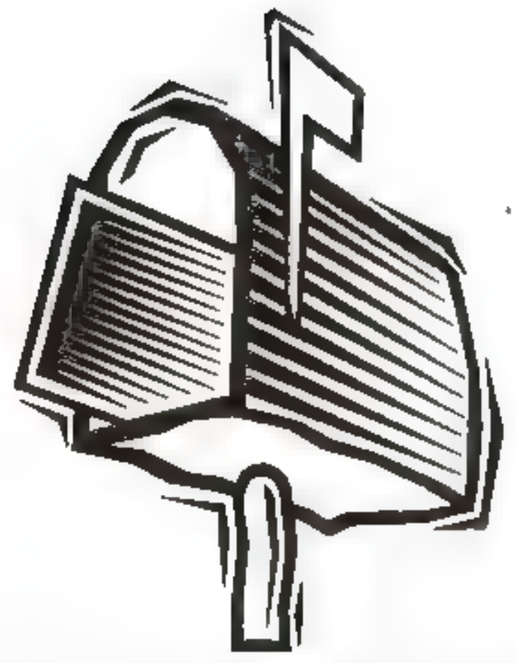
LETTERS



Dear Editor
I am a true-blue, devoted and raving fan of *Comic Book Marketplace.* It is the only professional periodical devoted to the comics I love. It is the only one with features interesting enough and well written enough for me to read cover-to-cover. It is the best magazine about comics on the stands. But now I'm not so sure.

I thoroughly enjoyed the first issue of *Comic Book PROFILES.* The concept of devoting an entire issue to one artist and/or writer turns me into a maniacal fanboy! And, the whole issue devoted to Joe Kubert!! WOW. Kubert is one of the first artists I learned to recognize as a youth, beginning the road to comic collecting. I have recently completed the DC run of Tarzan and have almost finished the 1970's and 1980's run of DC war books, and the first issue feature on Joe Kubert topped off my enjoyment of his comics.

The interview was very worthwhile, made all the more so by including the supporting interviews. The supporting interview idea is not new, but I have never seen it used as effectively. To keep 14 professionals on the subject of someone other than themselves speaks highly of, not only Joe Kubert, but themselves as well. The overview of the Joe Kubert School was very educational since I had only heard of the school by name, and always wondered what it would be like to attend. I would like to see the other 83 reasons why Hembeck is "Kooky-4-Kubert!" I'm sure I would agree with those too!

I have no complaints about the format or content of this issue. If the next 50 issues were exactly the same type of thing, that would be no problem with me. The only things I can suggest to improve upon are these:

1) Watch out for those nasty typos!

2) One of the reasons *CBM is* so popular is its value as a reference. Include a straight one or two page biography to support an interview just to give everything a chronological sense, if nothing else and even include a list of comics the professional has created. Obviously, with Kubert, the list would be bigger than the magazine itself, but with someone like Steranko, it is doable.

3) At $2.50, *CBP* is a bargain. However, an increased page count for artists that deserve the space and color layouts would make the magazine more attractive. I would gladly pay $4 to $5 for such a magazine, but I'm just one guy who happens to love reading <u>about</u> comics just as much as reading comics!

The subscription form included a survey that does not have nearly enough room to respond effectively. Thus:

As for artists, the top three that leap to mind are Jim Aparo, Howard Chaykin and Mike Grell. But there are others, of course. I mean, you've got to get to the other living legends, don't you? Like Eisner, Ayers, Heath, Davis, Kane (Gil and Bob), Infantino, Ditko, Romita, Anderson, Barks, Evans, Severin, Orlando, Williamson, and Novick. Then you can hit the newer guys: Byrne, Kaluta, Perez, Bolland, Garcia-Lopez, Starlin, DeCarlo, Rosa, Russell, Gibbons, Sienkiewicz, Sim, Steranko, Adams, Buscema (John and Sal), Giordano, Redondo, Glanzman, Miller, and Janson.

As for writers, my top three are Robert Kanigher, Bob Haney and Denny O'Neil. But again, there are others like Wein, Wolfman, Thomas, Goodwin, David, Moore, Conway, Maggin, Albano, Fleisher, and Lee.

There are other topics as well. An issue devoted to Infantino, Orlando and Giordano could be very revealing regarding DC's editorial policies over the last 30 years. Or an issue devoted to Thomas, O'Neil and Friedrich could set the record straight about Marvel's policies during the sixties and early seventies. Could one imagine the revelations Thomas, Wolfman, Wein and Conway could throw out regarding the revolving door of Marvel's Editor-in-Chief.?

And don't limit yourselves to artists and writers. Professionals also include letterers and colorists. How about Marie Severin, Tatjana Wood, Todd Klein, John Constanza or John Workman?

CBP is a super magazine. I will be a loyal purchaser, and I will spread the word. I look forward

to reading about Wrightson. Thank you for your time.
Chuck Garner

Thanks for the thoughtful letter Chuck. Being a fan of Comic Book Marketplace myself, I thought it high praise to be compared to that magazine. As Tina addressed earlier in this issue, we are working on the typo problem. You've also noticed the Timeline feature which addresses your second suggestion. Your third suggestion I would open up to the rest of the readers. Would you prefer to see larger page counts and color sections at the cost of higher prices? Going into this we wanted to keep the publication as affordable as possible. The original newsletter we did was free with the costs being borne by advertising. I'm acutely aware of all the products out there and how it can be a drain on your wallet! Thank you for all of your suggestions. Neal Adams is slated for next issue and another person on your list is slated for number four! Finally, I would love to do an issue devoted to one or more of the inkers and colorists you mentioned. In fact the last issue of the Hudson Valley Comic Newsletter featured an interview with John Workman.

Dear Tina and Matthew,

We were quite taken aback by your magazine. Neither Joe nor I realized that the entire magazine would be solely devoted to Joe and his career. A mere "thank you" is not enough. And, I can't think of any adjectives that completely express my reaction. I am so very pleased with the recognition you afforded my husband. All the articles were superb! I would also like to not only thank the both of you, but, also, Neal Adams, Jim Balent, John Byrne, Mike Chen, Mike Manley, Graham Nolan, Bill Oakley, John Ostrander, Dan Parent, Mike Pascale, Tim Truman, Marv Wolfman, and last, but most of all not least, our son, Adam.

Sincerely,
Muriel Kubert

We of course would like to echo those thanks!! We were also quite happy to hear that both Joe and you were pleased with the issue.

Matt and Tina,
Congratulations on a wonderful looking magazine. I think you guys did a fantastic job and look forward to other issues. Keep up the good work.

Graham Nolan

Just got my first issue of Profiles and have devoured it. Outstanding job.
Great interviews and comments and super artwork. Congratulations.

A couple of suggestions: Would it be possible to include photos of your subject? Also, I would be interested in a bit of information about the nuts and bolts of drawing—the brushes and pens artists use, the set up of their
studio/work area, how they handle reference, etc.

As for future subjects, I'd like to see:
John Romita, Gil Kane, Gene Colan, Stan Lee, Craig Russell, Barry Windsor-Smith, Neal Adams, John Buscema, Steve Ditko, & Will Eisner.

That'll do for starters. Thanks again! Keep up the great work. It'll be hard to top the Kubert issue.

Peter Wallace

Peter, we actually had intended to use a photo of Joe in the first issue but opted to use Adam's drawing at that last minute.
As for topping last issue, what do you think?

Before I sign off, I have a couple of questions for you. You have seen the lists of creators requested for upcoming issues and I would like more feedback. For those of you that we have not heard from, what creators would you like to see profiled? Also, would more people like to see more technical aspects of drawing, and writing, addressed by the professionals? Remember our address is: ***As You Like It Publications, P.O. Box 2055, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 and the e-mail address is CBPROFILES@aol.com.***

I would like to thank everyone that wrote in. Space prevents me from including all of the letters! That's all for now- see you in 90!

WHAT'S ON DECK?

NEXT ISSUE!

NEAL ADAMS

In our next issue, Neal Adams talks to us about his career from his first work at Archie Comics, to the Ben Casey comic strip, to his work for DC, and beyond. He also lets us in on what to expect from Continuity Comics in 1998! As always, there will be many supporting interviews from family, friends, and associates of Neal's. And of course the issue would not be complete without Fred Hembeck's Final Thoughts.

HEMBECK'S FINAL THOUGHTS

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1 COVER, AND 56 PANELS SPREAD OVER 12 PAGES. THAT'S ALL IT TOOK FOR BERNI WRIGHTSON TO CHANGE MY LIFE FOREVER. SOME OF YOU YOUNG FOLKS MAY NOT REMEMBER, THOUGH, BECAUSE IT HAPPENED OVER 20 YEARS AGO. THOSE WERE THE DAYS WHEN "SWAMP THING" WAS AT THE ABSOLUTE PEAK OF IT'S MUCH DESERVED CRITICAL SUCCESS. EDITOR JOE ORLANDO AND WRITER LEN WEIN WERE ABLE TO HARNESS THE ILLUSTRATIVE GENIUS OF THE YOUNG WRIGHTSON FOR TEN SPLENDID ISSUES OF A SERIES THAT WOULD INSTANTLY BECOME--AND HAS SINCE REMAINED--A COMICS CLASSIC. WHEREAS OTHER BOOKS OF THE DAY-- EVEN THE BEST OF 'EM BY THE LIKES OF KIRBY, TOTH, DITKO OR KUBERT-- WERE CHURNED OUT RAPIDLY BY SKILLED CRAFTSMEN WHO KNEW THE TRICKS TO MEETING A JOB'S (USUALLY) MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS, "SWAMP THING" WAS OBVIOUSLY LOVINGLY AND PAINSTAKINGLY LINGERED OVER BY AN ARTIST WHO WAS INVESTING EACH AND EVERY PANEL WITH TREMENDOUS TALENT AND INSPIRATION.

AND THEN WORD CAME THAT I, BATMAN, WAS TO GUEST STAR IN ISSUE 7'S "NIGHT OF THE BAT".

NOW, MAKE NO MISTAKE--THE ERSATZ CHESTER GOULD STYLE FAVORED BY THE MANY GHOSTS OF BOB KANE HAD FINALLY VANISHED A DECADE EARLIER, INITIALLY DUE TO CARMINE INFANTINO'S SLEEK MODERN RENDERINGS, BUT PARTICULARILY OF LATE AS A RESULT OF NEAL ADAM'S WILDLY POPULAR (AND WILDLY SUCCESSFUL) HEIGHTENED REALISM APPROACH. UNDER ADAMS SKILLFUL GUIDANCE, I LOOKED REAL. REAL SCARY, TOO, BUT REAL. MY OTHER REGULAR ARTISTS--IRV NOVICK, BOB BROWN, DICK GIORDANO--FOLLOWED THIS PATH, BUT NEVER STRAYED FROM IT. NO ONE DID--AT LEAST, NOT UNTIL WRIGHTSON CAME ALONG AND BLAZED A TRAIL ALL HIS OWN!

NEVER HAD GOTHAM CITY LOOKED SO ATMOSPHERIC! NEVER HAD THE SHADOWS BEEN SO PLENTIFUL! AND *NEVER*--TRUST ME: *NEVER* HAD MY EARS AND CAPE BEEN SO ☆%#@ING LONG!!

OY.

WELL, AS YOU MIGHT IMAGINE, THE FANS ATE IT UP. TO THEM, I'D *NEVER* LOOKED SO COOL. THAT MAY BE ALL FINE AND GOOD, BUT HONESTLY, I'D *NEVER* HAD SUCH A TIME GOING ABOUT MY DUTIES. DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO MANEUVER IN A CAPE THIS LONG? HALF MY EFFORTS SEEMED TO GO TOWARD NOT TRIPPING--BECAUSE, HEY, HOW COOL WOULD THAT LOOK? AND POOR ALFRED--I ALMOST *POKED HIS EYE OUT* THAT FIRST NIGHT IN WRIGHTSON'S BATCAVE...

TRUTHFULLY, I WAS THANKFUL IT WAS ONLY THAT ONE ISSUE. FACT IS, IT'D BE QUITE SOME TIME BEFORE ANOTHER ADVENTURE OF MINE WOULD FIND IT'S WAY ONTO BERNI'S DRAWING BOARD. THINGS RETURNED TO NORMAL AFTER THAT-- AT LEAST, FOR A WHILE. I DIDN'T REALIZE AT THE TIME THAT ONCE WRIGHTSON HAD PUT HIS UNMISTAKABLE PERSONAL STAMP ON ME, OTHERS MIGHT WELL BE INSPIRED TO DO THE SAME. AND SURE ENOUGH, A WHOLE GENERATION OF CARTOONISTS--MANY OF WHOM WERE EXPOSED TO "NIGHT OF THE BAT" DURING THEIR FORMATIVE YEARS--HAVE COME INTO THE COMICS FIELD LOOKING FOR A CHANCE TO (FOR WANT OF A BETTER TERM) HAVE THEIR WAY WITH ME! WHY, IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE EVER PRESENT BAT ON MY CHEST, THERE ARE TIMES EVEN I WOULDN'T RECOGNIZE MYSELF!

AND *WRIGHTSON*? ASIDE FROM A FEW COVERS AND SOME INKING, IT TOOK HIM JUST ABOUT 20 YEARS TO HAVE ANOTHER GO AT ME. IRONICALLY ENOUGH, THE REVOLUTION HE SET IN MOTION WITH THAT SINGLE COMIC HAD BY THEN REACHED SUCH EXTREMES THAT, WHILE UNQUESTIONABLY BEAUTIFULLY DRAWN, HIS RENDITION OF ME IN "The CULT" SERIES WAS, AT THAT POINT, PRACTICALLY TRADITIONAL IN APPEARANCE. NONETHELESS, THERE'S NO DENYING THE FACT THAT, WITH THAT SOLE GUEST SHOT--AND A HEALTHY NOD IN NEAL ADAM'S DIRECTION--*BERNI WRIGHTSON* HAD AN INCALCULABLE IMPACT ON MY CAREER, AND I'D LIKE TO THANK HIM.

as told to FRED HEMBECK 1997

I THINK.

.. NOW, IF I CAN JUST FIGURE OUT A WAY TO GET DOWN FROM HERE?..

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COMIC BOOK

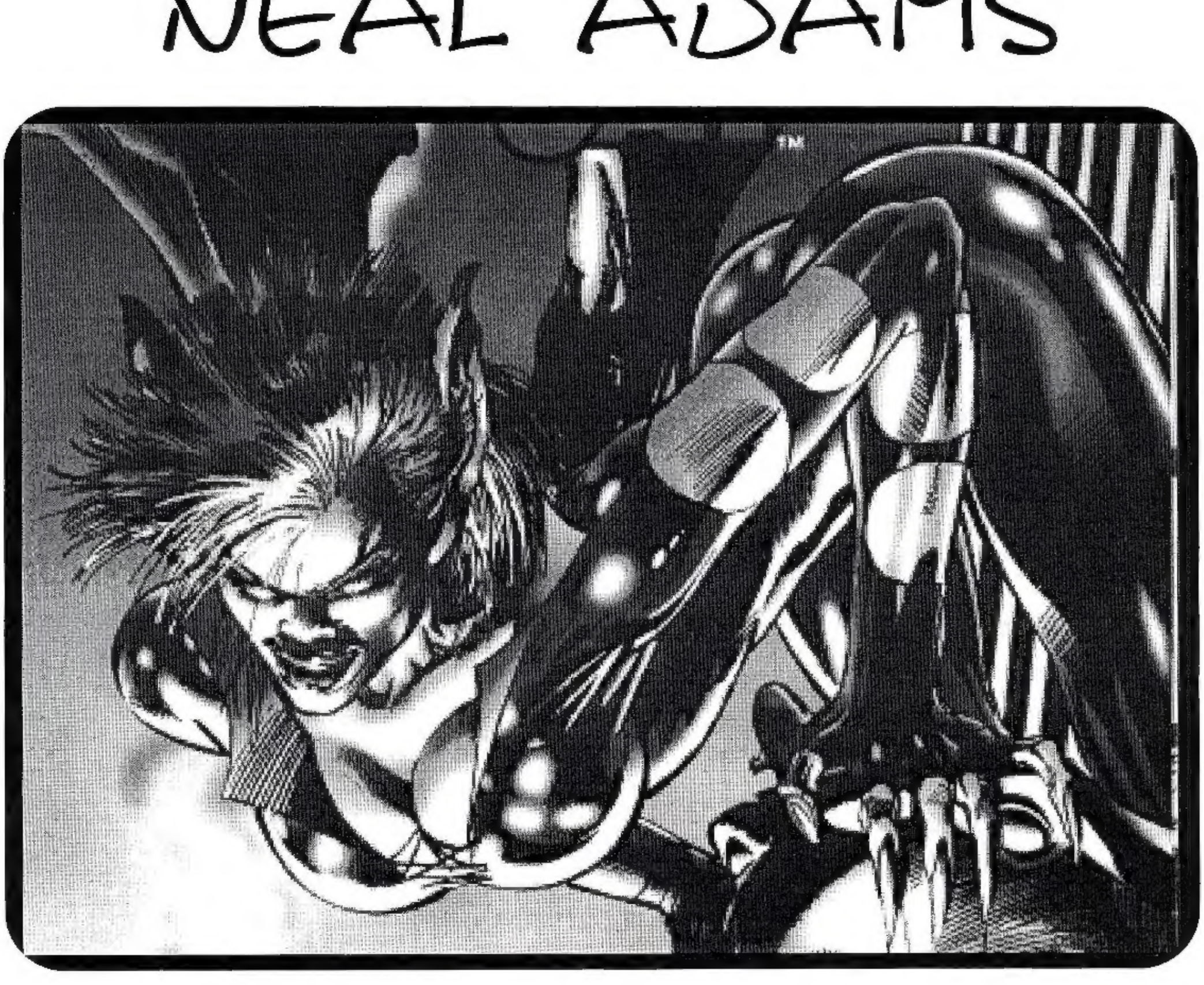
PROFILES™

The magazine about comic book professionals

Next Issue

presents

NEAL ADAMS



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